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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the role and scope of institutional research in regionally accredited, private colleges with a headcount enrollment of less than 3000 students located in the southeastern United States. The study queried 252 individuals (155 responses) who were primarily responsible for institutional research about the activities and role of the director on institutional research. Major conclusions included the following: (1) most small, private colleges lacked an effective institutional research operation and were therefore unprepared for accreditation evaluation; (2) the role of director of institutional research needed definition; (3) institutional research in these colleges received inadequate institutional commitment and support; and (4) institutional research activities were primarily dispersed, disjointed, and characterized by report generation for external organizations. Analysis of the findings suggested a model institutional research operation for small, private colleges with components covering: the role and characteristics of the director of institutional research; the organizational location, staffing, and funding of the office of institutional research; institutional research activities supporting institutional accreditation; and institutional culture and context of the institutional research function. Contains 22 references. (GLR)

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AN INVESTIGATION OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH IN SMALL, PRIVATE COLLEGES IN THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES

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Michael Clyburn Ed.D.

Contributed Paper for the Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research

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for Management Research, Policy Analysis, and Planning

This paper was presented at the Thirty-First Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research held at The Westin St. Francis, San Francisco, California, May 26-29, 1991. This paper was reviewed by the AIR Forum Publications Committee and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC Collection of Forum Papers.

Jean Endo
Chair and Editor
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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the role and scope of institutional research in regionally accredited, private colleges with a headcount enrollment of less than 3000 students located in the southeastern United States.

Components of a model institutional research program for small, private colleges were developed through an analysis of the data and institutional research criteria established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Presentation of the study results will provide critical information about institutional research strategies for small, private colleges preparing for accreditation with limited resources.

INTRODUCTION

During the 1980's, constituents, government, and accreditation agencies expressed concern for improved management, performance, and institutional accountability in higher education. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the accrediting agency for educational institutions in the southeastern United States, moved to the forefront in responding to these national concerns.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools developed new criteria on institutional effectiveness for colleges and universities. Such criteria encouraged accredited colleges to formulate and clarify their mission and institutional goals and to establish an ongoing evaluation of institutional effectiveness through institutional research. Revised standards on institutional effectiveness required colleges to develop an institutional research program that effectively served the institution's evaluation of educational outcomes and decision-making processes (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 1988). Specifically, the criteria mandated:

1. Institutions engage in continuous analysis and appraisal of their purposes, policies, procedures, and programs.
2. Institutions assign administrative responsibility for carrying out institutional research.
3. Adequate allocation of resources for institutional research.

4. Access to all relevant information by individuals responsible for institutional research.

Research activities recommended by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools included:

Entering student surveys
Non-returning student surveys
Exit interviews
Graduate/completer surveys
Faculty/staff surveys
Retention/attrition studies
Transfer studies
Placement studies
Employer surveys
Program/course evaluations
Self-study reports
Special committee reports
Alumni Surveys
Community needs assessments
Labor market surveys
Student performance studies
Enrollment reports
Financial/Audit reports
Government reports
Program reviews and personnel evaluations

(Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 1987).

In conjunction with changes in accreditation standards, a number of market forces created the impetus for efficiency and effectiveness in higher education. Factors which shaped the management and survival of higher education were: declining youth cohort, aging faculty, rapidly changing technology base, expanding communications and information systems, rapidly decreasing half-life for career obsolescence, and growing recognition of the relationship between economic development and education (Heydinger, 1985).

The changing market conditions faced by higher education heightened the need for effective environmental

scanning activities and strategic planning. These dimensions of educational administration required the support of ongoing, systemic institutional research. Colleges and universities meeting the new directives of accreditation and surviving the changing environmental forces must establish an effective institutional research program.

Statement of the Problem

The national concern for educational quality, the new accreditation standards of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and the changing market conditions of higher education characterized the need for continuous institutional assessment through ongoing institutional research.

From a review of the literature it was found that the current models of institutional research and the emerging roles and activities of the director of institutional research have received limited investigation (Stevenson and Walleri, 1984; McKinney and Others, 1986; Fenstemacher, 1982; Boyles, 1988). The most recent studies which examined the role and activities of the director of institutional research were primarily single issue investigations which focused on the organized office of institutional research in large, public universities.

It was also found that the activities and role of the director of institutional research in the small, private college had not been investigated. Consequently, this lack of information has limited the definition and development of a

model office of institutional research for small, private colleges.

If institutions are to successfully respond to the aforementioned forces, with the attendant lack of direction, it is imperative that the current state of institutional research be assessed and information essential to the development of a viable model for institutional research for the small, private college be secured, analyzed, and reported.

Purpose of the Investigation

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role and scope of institutional research in regionally accredited, private colleges with an enrollment less than 3000, located in the southeastern United States, in order to propose a research-based model office of institutional research.

To accomplish the purpose of the study, the following objectives were formulated:

1. Identify the academic, career, and demographic characteristics of the person(s) primarily responsible for institutional research.
2. Identify the institutional size, institutional type, and organizational structure of each institution.
3. Identify the financial allocations and staffing characteristics of the office primarily responsible for institutional research.
4. Identify the primary activities of the personnel within the

office of institutional research.

5. Collect information from selected individuals who were identified by survey respondents as having an exemplary institutional research office in a four year, regionally accredited, private college in the southeastern United States.
6. Compare the findings of the study with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' role of institutional research with the characteristics of exemplary institutional research offices in four year, regionally accredited, private colleges in the southeastern United States.

Importance of the Study

The study linked the lack of research and information concerning institutional research in small, private colleges with the heretofore, inadequate support for the development of a model office of institutional research for small, private colleges in the southeastern United States. Revised accreditation standards, which mandated the development of an ongoing institutional research effort in all accredited institutions of higher education in the southeastern United States, heightened the seriousness of this problem. Another dimension of the problem was the changing market environment of small, private colleges which faced diminished resources and an increased need for efficiency, better strategic planning, and ongoing institutional research.

Information about institutional research in small,

private colleges was limited and severely dated. This lack of research presented a formidable barrier to administrators, who needed a descriptive model of institutional research for the development or improvement of their institutional research program.

Small, private colleges encountered increased pressure for efficiency, effectiveness, and evaluation by constituencies and accreditation agency. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' new Criteria on Institutional Effectiveness mandated that colleges establish an institutional research program which would support a broad-based effort to evaluate institutional effectiveness.

Small, private colleges faced acute difficulty, as they searched for a viable model of institutional research which supported the development or the improvement of a successful institutional research program. As institutions faced these demands, the development of a model institutional research office for small, private colleges became essential. Consequently, the lack of research for the definition of a model institutional research office presented a significant obstacle to institutional improvement, accreditation, and survival.

Results of the study will provide administrators of small, private colleges and educational administration theorists precise descriptions of institutional research in small, private colleges. The investigation identified emerging

patterns of institutional research characteristics, activities, and organization. Study results provided critical information for the development of a model institutional research office. The study identified institutional research strategies for small, private colleges preparing for accreditation with limited resources.

Finally, the results of the study provided current information about the role and activities of institutional research which is vital to local, state, and regional agencies responsible for evaluative standards of higher education institutions.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Institutional Research in Small, Private Colleges

During the 1970's researchers in higher education gave limited attention to the role and activities of institutional research in small, private colleges. Knowles (1970) reported that institutional research activities did occur in institutions without an established unit of institutional research. In these institutions, registrars, academic officers, budget officers, and faculty members were involved in institutional research activities. Knowles (1970) proposed that small colleges could no longer avoid the careful collection of basic institutional data. It was noted that small colleges, with an institutional research unit, focused on potential sources of income (i.e. alumni, charitable

organizations, and religious groups with which these institution were affiliated).

Dressel (1970) suggested that it was not financially feasible for smaller institutions of higher education to employ a full-time director of institutional research. Therefore, small colleges were forced to identify personnel capable of coordinating the function of institutional research.

The concern of small colleges for operational efficiency and survival in the late 1970's generated the development of dispersed institutional research activities. Some private colleges responded to their enrollment crisis with an expansion of their recruiting base and failed to instigate institution-wide analysis of the impact of consequent change. These institutions demonstrated a strong bias for action and neglect of institutional data (Berquist and Shoemaker, 1976).

Harvey (1977) developed recommendations for small colleges whose institutional research function supported institutional survival. In this model, institutional research was characterized by the development of an effective radar system for policy-making, the development of a consumer-oriented scanning system, and the development of a pruning mentality.

Small private colleges were especially vulnerable to the turbulence and change which faced higher education in the late 1970's. A study involving 56 institutional members of the Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges reported the need for meaningful information that supported administrative

decision-making. The findings indicated the lack of assessment and information analysis for the implementation of planning processes in small, independent colleges (Shtogren, 1978).

Significant barriers have existed regarding the establishment of institutional research in the small, private college. Cooke (1979) proposed that the lack of trained personnel for institutional research in small, private colleges diluted the focus and role of the unit. In these institutions, institutional research had to be all things to all people.

Cope (1979) indicated that the identification of the institutional research function with another institutional office was characteristic of small, private colleges. This organizational pattern limited the breadth of the function's activities. The informal decision-making process in small, private institutions inhibited the organized collection of information for administrative decision-making. Characteristic dispersion of institutional research function throughout the college organization was detrimental to the development of an effective office of institutional research. This accompanied the lack of professional development opportunities for institutional researchers in the small, private college. In spite of these limitations, the review of the literature indicated a growing need for the activities of institutional research in small, private colleges.

Falender and Merson (1983) associated small college survival with an accurate and timely information system which

supported effective management strategy. Institutional research provided the coordination and development of this information system. Survival was more vulnerable in small colleges because of their characteristic unique institutional objectives, lower financial reserves, greater sensitivity to declining enrollment, proportionally higher fixed costs, and fewer opportunities for financial retrenchment.

Van Atta and Carrier (1986) suggested that effective institutional research programs on the small college campus did not exist. Institutional research was not taken seriously and the activity was left to departmental managers with no systematic logic for the collection and analysis of information. In support of this premise, Losak (1986) noted the elimination of the position of institutional research director for fiscal reasons. Institutions also reclassified and renamed the position to include new or additional responsibilities.

The analyses of Jedamus, Peterson and Associates (1980), Brinkman and Krakower (1983), Falender and Merson (1983), Graff (1986), Hoverland, McInturff, and Rohm (1986), and Losak (1986) supported the premise that an effective institutional research function in an era of retention, reduction, and turbulent change was vital to the survival of the small, private college. Review of the literature demonstrated that a viable model of institutional research in small, private colleges needed development and definition. The review of the literature also

indicated the need for further investigation which supported the development of a model office of institutional research for small, private colleges. The lack of definitive research in this area prompted the investigator to pursue this study in order to propose a model office of institutional research for the small, private college.

METHODOLOGY

Survey Population

The population consisted of 252 individuals primarily responsible for institutional research in small, private colleges with an enrollment of less than 3000 students located in the southeastern United States. These institutions were in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' 1989 List of Member Colleges and Universities. Of the population surveyed, 155 (61.5%) members responded to a questionnaire which solicited information about the activities and role of the director of institutional research. Only 5 (3.2%) of the 155 respondents did not complete the questionnaire.

Twenty-two respondents indicated no institutional research organization or function within their institution. Of these 22 respondents 18 were church-related, and 4 were independent. Respondents from 128 institutions reported some form of institutional research associated activity. It was found that 91 of these respondents were from church-related institutions, and 37 of these respondents were from independent institutions.

Members of the study population who did not respond to the survey represented 97 small private colleges. Of these 97 small, private colleges 70 were church related; and 27 were independent. Of these non-respondents, 78 designated no institutional research personnel in the 1989 Higher Education Directory (Higher Education Publications, 1989). A telephone survey of a random sample of 15 non-respondents was conducted. While one member of the sample indicated "some research activity", fourteen members reported no institutional function.

Comparative analyses of respondents' and non-respondents' mean institutional enrollment and institutional sponsorship presented no significant variations which might influence the validity of the data. Analysis of respondents' and non-respondents' mean institutional enrollment using the t-test produced a t-value of -.93 associated with an observed significance level of .356. The hypothesis that the respondents' and non-respondents' enrollment means were equal in the population could not be rejected at the .05 level of significance. Furthermore, a Chi-Square analysis of respondents' and non-respondents' institutional sponsorship produced a Chi-Square of .00074 (with Yates Correction) at an observed significance level of .9783. The hypothesis that institutional sponsorship and survey response were independent could not be rejected at the .05 level of significance. Consequently, it was felt that the lack of information from non-respondents did not significantly alter the findings of the

study.

Survey Instrument

A questionnaire was used to conduct a census of the population to gather information concerning the activities and role of the director of institutional research. Data collected included the personal and career characteristics of the director of institutional research and the activities and organizational characteristics of the office of institutional research. The items in the questionnaire represented current issues, concerns, and activities of institutional research identified in the review of the literature. Three categories of items were included to assess the institutional research function in the areas of activities, organization, and the characteristics of the director of institutional research. A fourth category asked for information which identified perceived exemplary offices of institutional research.

Pilot Study

The questionnaire was evaluated by directors of institutional research, who were identified as having expertise and experience in conducting institutional research. Twenty directors of institutional research from the southeastern United States were selected on the basis of their experience in higher education. The Pilot Study focused on offices of institutional research which were not part of the study population. Respondents were asked to answer the items on the

questionnaire and complete the attached instrument evaluation. The instrument evaluation requested comments or suggestions which would improve the validity of the instrument and strengthen its design. Pilot Study results were used to evaluate and redesign the questionnaire.

Interviews

Structured interviews, using an interview protocol were conducted with 3 directors of institutional research. These individuals were identified by respondents as having an exemplary office of institutional research. Information collected from the investigation included the directors' strategies, activities, organizations, recommendations, and philosophies of institutional research.

Treatment of the Data

Descriptive information was gathered by a census of the population using a questionnaire sent to 252 directors of institutional research in small, private colleges in the southeastern United States. Statistical procedures were used to examine the frequency and variability of the data. These data were presented in tables that identified:

1. Institutional research activities undertaken.
2. Administrative hierarchy of the institutional research function.
3. Institution sponsorship.
4. Institution's size, budget, and staffing characteristics

of the office of institutional research.

5. Personal, academic, and career characteristics of the director of institutional research.

Information from interviews of the 3 designated directors of institutional research were presented in narrative and tabular form. This information was organized to identify the following components of the exemplary office of institutional research:

1. Resources, activities, and organizational characteristics of the exemplary office of institutional research.
2. Role, demographic, academic, and career characteristics of the director of the exemplary office of institutional research.
3. Unique strategies, challenges, and opportunities for institutional research in small, private colleges preparing for accreditation.

RESULTS

The role and activities of the director of institutional research, the personal, academic and career characteristics of the director of institutional research, and the organizational characteristics of the office of institutional research in small, private, colleges were analyzed and presented in the following list of findings.

Age, Sex, Educational Level, Academic Preparation, and Career Characteristics of the Director of Institutional Research.

Directors of institutional research ranged from 24 to 76 years of age with a mean age of 45.3 years. Nearly 13 percent did not indicate their age. Eighty (62.5%) of the respondents were male, and 35 (27.3%) were female. Thirteen (10.2%) respondents did not report their gender.

An examination of academic preparation revealed 10 (7.8%) of the respondents held the Bachelors Degree; 31 (24.2%) held the Masters Degree; and 73 (57.0%) reported the doctorate as their highest degree. Respondents indicated three primary academic areas as the major field of study for their highest degree. Liberal arts disciplines were reported by 73 (57.0%) of the respondents; education was indicated by 27 (21.1%) of the respondents; and 14 (10.9%) respondents indicated business and business administration as the major field of study for the highest degree.

Crosstabulation of respondents highest degree and major field of study for highest degree is presented in Table 1. Analysis of the information presented in Table 1 indicated that over one-half of the respondents held their highest degree in a liberal arts discipline.

Three items were presented in the questionnaire regarding the respondents' longevity in higher education, in their current institution, and in institutional research. Respondents reported a mean of 15.4 years employment in higher

education, 11.4 years in their current institution, and 3.8 years of employment in institutional research. Respondents' longevity in higher education, in their current institution, and in institutional research are reported in Table 2.

Thirteen (10.1%) of the respondents did not report years of employment in their institution or in higher education, while 11.7 percent did not report years of employment in institutional research. The omission of information may have been an oversight on the part of the respondents or an indication of respondents reticence to provide this information. Analysis of the data suggested that 70.3 percent of the respondents had 5 years or less experience in institutional research, and approximately one-half had been employed in their current institution for 10 years or less.

Information regarding the institutional responsibilities of the director of institutional research was collected and analyzed. As shown in Table 3, 103 (80.5%) of the respondents had responsibilities other than institutional research. Among the other institutional responsibilities listed, 36 were professors; 19 were academic deans; 17 were registrars; 16 were other administrators; 14 were responsible for planning; and one was dean of students.

Membership in professional institutional research organizations was indicated by 55 (42.3%) of the respondents. Of the respondents indicating membership, 50 (90.9%) were members of the Association of Institutional Research or one of

its regional divisions. Other study participants reported membership in professional organizations related to planning, higher education, and educational research. One held membership in the Society of College and University Planners; one held membership in the American Association of Higher Education; two indicated membership in the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers; and one reported membership in the American Educational Research Association. However, 73 of the respondents indicated no membership in professional institutional research organizations.

The questionnaire presented an item regarding joint appointments with other academic departments and time allocated to institutional research. Almost 43 percent of the respondents had some responsibility for institutional research and a joint appointment in another academic department. Institutional researchers held joint appointments, as liberal arts faculty, registrar, academic dean, college administration, or education faculty.

Analysis of the data suggested varied characteristics of joint appointments within the office of institutional research. A predominant pattern depicted a member of the liberal arts faculty allocating less than 50 percent of his/her time for institutional research.

Almost 15 percent of the respondents reported having professional personnel in the office of institutional research

with joint appointments in other college departments. Of the professional personnel, who assisted with institutional research, nearly 53 percent allocated 75 percent or more of their time to the following departments: office of the academic dean, college administrative offices, liberal arts disciplines, and education.

Respondents did not report extensive joint appointments of professional personnel within the office of institutional research. College administrative offices were the predominant source of professional personnel assigned to perform duties within the office of institutional research.

Size and Sponsorship of the Institution Having an Organized Office of Institutional Research.

The mean undergraduate FTE enrollment for all participants was 918.5 with a range from 37 FTE to 2998 FTE. Of the respondents, 55 indicated a graduate full time equivalent range from 6 FTE to 2280 FTE with a mean enrollment of 293.9 FTE. Seventy-three of the respondents indicated no graduate enrollment.

It was found that 91 (71.1%) respondents were from church or denomination-related institutions; while 37 (28.9%) represented independent or non-religious institutions. Primary characteristics of institutional size and type were identified through an analysis of the data. Most of the respondents represented religious institutions with an undergraduate enrollment of 1500 FTE or less and a mean enrollment of 918.5.

Approximately one-half of the respondents were associated with institutions having a graduate enrollment of 500 FTE or less and a mean enrollment of 293.9.

Organizational Location of the Director of Institutional Research.

Nearly 55 percent of the directors of institutional research reported to the President, while 34 percent reported to the Chief Academic Officer. Among the respondents, 9 indicated that they reported to other administrative officers including the Director of Planning and the Chief Fiscal Officer. Six did not respond to the questionnaire item.

Fiscal Allocation and Staffing Characteristics Established by Small, Private Colleges for Institutional Research Activities.

Three separate items in the questionnaire solicited information about the administrative, personnel, operations, and equipment budgets of the institutional research function. Almost 54 percent of the respondents identified an administrative budget for institutional research. The mean administrative budget was $23,488.06 with a range from $2000.00 to $80,000.00.

None of the respondents indicated a budget allocation for graduate assistants or clerical personnel within the institutional research area. However, 62 (48.4%) respondents identified an operating budget for institutional research. The mean operating budget was $3594.58 with a range from $245.00 to $10,000.00. Almost 26 percent of the respondents identified an

equipment budget for institutional research. The mean equipment budget was $2896.45 with a range from $200.00 to $12,500.00.

Approximately one-half of the respondents did not identify an administrative budget or operational budget for institutional research. Most respondents did not report an equipment budget; and no respondents provided information regarding their personnel budget for institutional research. This lack of response suggested that institutional research activity in these institutions was dispersed and lacked a formal organization and identifiable budget.

Only one-half of the respondents indicated a fiscal allocation for institutional research. Analysis of the reported funding for institutional research suggested a characteristic administrative budget of $50,000.00 or less with operating and equipment budgets of $2500.00 or less.

Staffing characteristics within the office of institutional research were identified by the study participants. Almost 51 percent of the respondents reported clerical personnel in the office of institutional research. Slightly less than 11 percent indicated the assignment of graduate assistants; and almost 21 percent were assisted by professional personnel.

Most clerical personnel and graduate assistants devoted less than 50 percent time or less to institutional research. Approximately one-half of the professional staff members within

the office of institutional research devoted 75 percent or less of their time to institutional research.

Most respondents did not report the support of full-time clerical, graduate assistant, or professional personnel within the office of institutional research. Analysis of the data suggested that institutional research in these institutions was dispersed and lacked formal organizational structure, organizational identity, and institutional support.

As shown in Table 4, 43.0 percent of the respondents reported 25 percent or less time devoted to institutional research; 23.4 percent indicated from 26 to 50 percent time; 9.4 percent indicated from 51 to 75 percent time; and 11.7 percent reported over 75 percent time devoted to institutional research. It was found that 43 percent of the respondents devoted 25 percent or less of their time to institutional research; while two-thirds devoted 50 percent or less of their time to institutional research.

Analysis of the data suggested that among the respondents, institutional research received limited attention. This finding was also supported by the lack of response from 12.5 percent of the participants, who may have had difficulty defining or quantifying their role and activity as director of institutional research.

Evidence of limited support for institutional research was further established by an analysis of the staffing

characteristics reported by the respondents. It was found that 49.2 percent of the respondents indicated no clerical personnel; 89.1 percent reported no graduate assistant personnel; and 79.7 percent indicated no professional personnel within the office of institutional research. No pattern of staffing within the office of institutional research was suggested by analysis of the data. In the study, the director of institutional research was depicted as devoting 50 percent or less time to institutional research; holding joint appointment as academic dean, registrar, college administrator or faculty member; having limited or no support from clerical, graduate assistant, or professional personnel; and conducting research with undefined funding or organization.

Current Activities of the Director of Institutional Research in Small, Private Colleges.

A list of institutional research projects, indicated in the literature, was presented in the questionnaire. The respondents reported their level of participation with the research projects in the past 3 years by ranking their response according to the following scale:

0 - No involvement with the research activity and would not consider it.

1 - Might consider conducting the research activity but never undertaken.

2 - Research activity was undertaken once but probably will not be repeated.

3 - Research activity was undertaken once and may be repeated.

4 - Research activity was undertaken at least once and will be repeated as often as needed.

Responses to the survey item were tabulated and ranked according to frequency of response. Analysis of these responses indicated which research activities were undertaken once and might be repeated, and which research activities were undertaken at least once and repeated as needed. This information was necessary in order to investigate the frequency of research activities conducted by the directors of institutional research.

As shown in Table 5, over 50 percent of the respondents reported ongoing participation with 15 of the 32 institutional research projects listed in the questionnaire. Analysis of the data suggested four patterns of institutional research activity:

1. Report generation for accreditation, government agencies, and the Board of Trustees. These activities are historically associated with institutional research. This dimension of institutional research is rarely associated with institutional policy-making and decision-making.
2. Planning and enrollment projections. Participants in the study represented institutions which received substantial funding through tuition. This aspect of

institutional research is vital to the management processes of these institutions.

3. Assistance with research design. As a resource person, the institutional researcher provided expertise with survey research and interpretation of study results.
4. Faculty and curriculum studies. Institutional research supported the development of curriculum and the evaluation of teaching.

Studies and activities which investigated student learning were rarely undertaken by the respondents. Activities receiving a low ranking of participation included: analysis of student goals, study of the effects of non-intellectual factors on student success, investigation of the adjustment problems of students, evaluation of new teaching methods, analysis of student motivation, and research on the study habits of students. Research activities which supported funding from tax sources, land acquisition, and funding from private sources received minimal involvement by the respondents.

The questionnaire also solicited information from respondents regarding other projects undertaken by their office of institutional research. Report generation for accreditation and government agencies was the most frequent activity indicated. Other projects undertaken by the institutional researcher focused on graduation rates, alumni, curriculum, student values, enrollment, fund-raising, retention, campus environment, academic research, library,

class size, institutional profile, and institutional records.

Ironically, institutional research activities which investigated learning and student behavior were least likely to be undertaken by the respondents. This may have reflected the academic preparation of the researcher and/or the priorities of the institution.

Respondent Comments

The questionnaire solicited comments from the study participants which might explain their responses or provide information on other aspects of institutional research overlooked by the instrument. Of the respondents who participated in this study, 23 indicated the development of an institutional research function in the formative stages. Respondents' comments focused on the need for resources and research which supported the development of an institutional research program prescribed by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. This finding was related to the response from 22 members of the population who indicated no institutional research organization or function within their institution, and 90 of the study participants who indicated 5 years or less employment in institutional research. It was also found that 73 respondents reported no membership in professional institutional research organizations. Taken in total, these findings suggested that institutional researchers in small, private colleges lacked training, information, and experience essential to the development of an institutional

research function. Furthermore, the recent enactment of accreditation standards, based on effective institutional research, strengthened the need for a model office of institutional research for small, private colleges.

Role and Characteristics of Institutional Research Suggested by the Findings

Data provided by study participants were analyzed to investigate the current characteristics of institutional research within small, private colleges in the southeastern United States. Predominant characteristics regarding the role, activities, academic preparation, demographics, and experience of the director of institutional research were suggested by an analysis of the data.

The typical director of institutional research was male, between 40 and 50 years of age, and held the doctorate in a liberal arts discipline. This individual devoted half-time to institutional research, shared responsibilities with an academic department of the institution, and reported to the President. The director had five years or less experience in institutional research, was employed by the current institution 10 years or less, and had spent 15 years or less in higher education. This individual was not a member of a professional institutional research organization.

The office of institutional research was supported by one clerical position. Funding for the institutional research function was dispersed across the institution, and fiscal

allocation for operations and equipment was limited, undefined, or non-existent. Activities of the director of institutional research focused on report generation for accreditation and government agencies, long-range planning, research design, and faculty studies.

It was found that institutional research within the institutions investigated lacked identity, organization, and adequate resources. Most institutional research activity was directed by individuals who lacked training, experience, information, and sufficient allocation of time for the development of an effective institutional research function. Specific fiscal allocation for institutional research could not be calculated in these institutions. Analysis of the findings suggested that institutional research, within the institutions studied, was directed by inadequately prepared persons with primary duties other than institutional research. These individuals supervised dispersed, disjointed institutional research activity in institutions not clearly committed to effective institutional research.

Research activities recommended by the accreditation criteria were compared with the pattern of research projects reported by the respondents. Report generation for accreditation and government agencies, planning analyses, research design, and faculty studies were recommended by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and regularly undertaken by the repondents.

Student performance studies, retention and attrition studies, employer surveys, and alumni research were institutional research activities recommended by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. It was found that these activities were not regularly undertaken by the respondents. The study did not solicit information from the respondents regarding the longitudinal or information access dimensions of research required by the criteria.

Although the accreditation criteria established no guidelines for the administration of institutional research, adequate resources for the research function were required. The respondents indicated undefined fiscal allocation and limited human resources for the support of institutional research.

Analysis of the data regarding joint appointment of the director of institutional research, staffing characteristics of the office of institutional research, and time devoted to institutional research suggested that institutional research was dispersed, disjointed, and incapable of meeting the criteria established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Analysis of the information provided by the directors of exemplary offices of institutional research provided descriptive information regarding the predominant role and activities of an exemplary institutional research operation. The following is a synopsis of the information

provided by these participants.

Role of the Director of an Exemplary Institutional Research Office

The director of institutional research had broad-based experience in higher education, held the doctorate in education or statistics, and reported to the President of the institution. This individual devoted full-time to institutional research and had the assistance of clerical staff. The director held membership in appropriate professional organizations for educational research.

Essential role characteristics of the director of institutional research were defined as strong communication skills, access to institutional information, and institutional service as a "team player". The role of the director of institutional research was further defined by the following characterizations:

1. The director of institutional research served as an advisor to the President and other institutional decison-makers on matters of policy, planning, establishment of goals, and evaluation and reported to the President.
2. The director was a resource for individuals or departments engaged in institutional research. The researcher assisted with the collection and interpretation of institutional data.
3. The director coordinated the comprehensive, systematic,

ongoing collection and analysis of data which supported the institution's planning process.

Activities of the Exemplary Office of Institutional Research

1. The institutional research office maintained a longitudinal analysis of the institution's enrollment, finances, career services, financial aid, alumni studies, and student affairs.
2. The office provided support services to academic and management areas of the institution by compiling and reporting data for departments conducting outcomes evaluation.
3. The office of institutional research monitored the institution's planning processes through the development and maintenance of systematic reporting activities.
4. Prompt and accurate service provided in a climate of trust and cooperation was a primary goal of the office of institutional research.

Conclusions

Based upon the findings reported in the analysis of the data, four conclusions were made regarding the role, activities, organization, and support for institutional research in small, private colleges.

1. Most small, private colleges lacked an effective institutional research operation and were therefore

unprepared for accreditation evaluation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' accreditation criteria directed member institutions to develop an institutional research program for ongoing evaluation of their purposes, policies, procedures and programs. In the institutions surveyed, an organized office of institutional research did not exist or was in the formative states of development. While 22 members of the survey population reported no institutional research function within their institution, 23 study participants reported recent efforts to develop an office of institutional research. Furthermore, among the non-respondents, 78 institutions designated no institutional research personnel in the 1989 Higher Education Directory.

2. Among small, private colleges the role of director of institutional research needed definition.

Accreditation criteria established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools mandated assignment of competent administrative responsibility for carrying out institutional research. A majority of the respondents indicated less than a full-time director of institutional research. These individuals often held joint appointment as faculty in a liberal arts discipline. Respondents reported a lack of experience in institutional research and negligible exposure to professional development through membership in

professional institutional research organizations.

3. Institutional research in small private colleges received inadequate institutional commitment and support.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' accreditation criteria required member institutions to allocate adequate resources for institutional research. Most respondents could not identify a separate administrative, personnel, operational, or equipment budget for institutional research. Study participants reported limited clerical or professional assistance in the office of institutional research.

4. Institutional research activities conducted in small private colleges were primarily dispersed, disjointed, and characterized by report generation for external organizations.

While the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' Criteria prescribed continuous, institutional analysis, study participants indicated preoccupation with report generation, enrollment projections, research design, and faculty and curriculum studies. Student performance studies, retention and attrition studies, employer surveys, and alumni research were activities recommended by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools but rarely undertaken by respondents.

Recommendations

Small, private colleges with an enrollment of less

than 3000, which seek re-accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools under the new Criteria for Institutional Effectiveness, would be well-advised to consider the following model as they establish or strengthen an office of institutional research. Analysis of the findings in the study suggested a model institutional research operation for small, private colleges in the southeastern United States. These institutions must establish an institutional research function according to the accreditation standards of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The characteristics of this model were developed through an evaluation of reported institutional research operations, recommendations from directors of exemplary offices of institutional research, and institutional research criteria established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Major components of this model would include:

1. Role and professional characteristics of the director of institutional research.
2. Organizational location, staffing, and funding of the office of institutional research.
3. Institutional research activities which would support institutional accreditation.
4. Institutional culture and context of the institutional research function.

Role and Professional Characteristics of the Director of Institutional Research

The director of institutional research would function as a catalyst for the coordination of gathering, analyzing, and reporting institutional data. This individual would provide full-time leadership for systematic institutional evaluation and would encourage research-based decisions by administrators. The director would be involved integrally in institutional planning, policy-making, establishing goals, and evaluation. The researcher would serve as an advisor to the chief executive officer in the areas of planning, budget, academic programs, and student development. This individual would be a resource person for all ongoing, decentralized assessment activities.

The qualifications of the director of institutional research would include demonstrated skills in higher education administration and educational research/statistics. An exemplary director would have experience in institutional research and higher education and would participate in professional institutional research organizations.

Organizational Location, Staffing and Funding of the Office of Institutional Research

The office of institutional research would have broad exposure to all academic and administrative departments of the institution. While the director of institutional research would report to the President, many of the office's activities would involve academic departments, programs, and policies. An advisory committee representing the constituents of the

institutional research function would assist the director with the development and evaluation of the institutional research operation. This evaluation would provide information concerning the strengths and weaknesses of institutional research organization and activity.

Staffing and funding characteristics of the office of institutional research would be developed according to the variety and complexity of institutional programs and institutional size. Support from at least one full-time clerical position would be essential to the efficiency and productivity of the office. Professional personnel having shared appointments within the office of institutional research could also be utilized. Budget allocations for administration, personnel, operations, and equipment would be defined and categorized to improve institutional accountability for institutional research.

Institutional Research Activities Which Support Institutional Accreditation

Institutional research activities would be formulated and conducted with an emphasis on longitudinal and systems analysis. These activities would support the evaluation of programs, policies, and procedures and enable the institution to evaluate goal attainment. Activities which strengthen this process would include:

Student drop-out study
Faculty demographic analysis
Departmental curriculum evaluation
Evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching

Student characteristics profile
Enrollment projections
Study of the goals of students
Study prepared for long-range planning
Alumni research
Report generation for accreditation
Development of the self-study
Report generation for government agencies

Assistance with research design and interpretation of data would be ongoing activities that would support both centralized and decentralized institutional assessment.

Institutional Culture and Context of the Institutional Research Function

The director of institutional research would have communication skills which support relationships with other institutional offices and officers. Activities of the director would be undertaken in a climate of trust and honesty. This individual would be perceived by faculty and administrators as competent, fair, and committed to accurate information. Research activities would be conducted throughout the institution in an atmosphere of cooperation.

As the primary institutional researcher, this individual would have access to all institutional data and would work closely with the President. The director would be viewed by institutional representatives as a well-trained, industrious, and detail-oriented researcher. All personnel within the office of institutional research would respond promptly to various requests for information and assistance. The director would be known as a "team player". This service philosophy would be communicated throughout the campus as committees,

departments, and administrators confidently utilized the office of institutional research.

Implementation or at least consideration of the critical components of the model would support the development and improvement of institutional research in small, private colleges seeking accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. This proposed model office of institutional research would be organized and implemented according to the unique mission, goals, and characteristics of the institution.

Recommendations For Further Research

1. It is recommended that other variables be considered in a critical appraisal of the survey instrument; e.g., year institution was established, date institution was accredited, academic programs and student services offered, and usage of national assessment services.
2. It is recommended that longitudinal and/or qualitative studies be conducted to investigate the development of institutional research in small, private colleges as they respond to criteria established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.
3. It is recommended that a similar investigation be conducted in other geographic regions to ascertain institutional responses to requirements of other accreditation agencies.

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Table 1

Crosstabulation of Respondents Highest Degree and Major Field of Study for Highest Degree
Summer, 1989

Major Field of Study	Highest Degree: Bachelors Freq.	Bachelors %	Masters Freq.	Masters %	Doctorate Freq.	Doctorate %	Total Freq.	Total %
Business and Bus. Admin.	3	2.6	6	5.3	5	4.4	14	12.3
Education	-	---	8	7.0	9	16.7	27	23.7
Liberal Arts	7	6.1	17	14.9	49	43.0	73	64.0
Total	10	8.7	31	27.2	73	64.1	114	100.0

Table 2

Years Employed in Higher Education; at Current Institution, and in Institutional Research Reported by Respondents in Small, Private Institutions
Summer, 1989

Employment Range	Years in Higher Education		Years at Current Institution		Years in Institutional Research	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1 - 5 years	17	13.3	42	32.8	90	70.3
6 - 10 years	25	19.5	22	17.2	15	11.7
11 - 15 years	24	18.8	16	12.5	6	4.7
16 - 20 years	20	15.6	19	14.8	1	0.8
21 - 25 years	13	10.2	8	6.3	1	0.8
More than 25 years	16	12.5	8	6.3	-	---
No Response	13	10.1	13	10.1	15	11.7
Total	128	100.0	128	100.0	128	100.0

Table 3

Other Responsibilities of the Director of Institutional Research in Small, Private Institutions Summer, 1989

Other Responsibilities	Freq.	%
Teaching	36	35.0
Academic Dean	19	18.4
Registrar	17	16.5
Other Administrators	16	15.5
Planning	14	13.6
Dean of Students	1	1.0
Total	103	100.0

Table 4

Percent Time Devoted to Institutional Research by Directors of Institutional Research in Small, Private Institutions Summer, 1989

Percent Time Devoted to Institutional Research	Freq.	%
25% or Less	55	43.0
26% - 50%	30	23.4
51% - 75%	12	9.4
76% - 100%	15	11.7
No Response	16	12.5
Total	128	100.0

Table 5

Institutional Research Projects Ranked as Undertaken Once and May Be Repeated; and Undertaken at Least Once and Will be Repeated as Needed by the Directors of Institutional Research in Small, Private Institutions Summer, 1989

Institutional Research Project	Freq.	%
Assistance in the development of the institutional self study	112	87.5
Report generation for accreditation agencies	110	85.9
Student characteristics profile	106	82.8
Study prepared for long-range planning	104	81.3
Report generation for federal/state agencies	100	78.1
Enrollment projections	98	76.6
Coordination of the completion of a major questionnaire	97	75.8
Development of a data collection system	95	74.2
Student drop out study	94	73.4
Faculty workload analysis	93	72.7
Report generation for the Board of Trustees	91	71.1
Evaluation of effectiveness of teaching	85	66.4
Departmental curriculum evaluation	80	62.5
Study at the request of a faculty group	78	60.9
Registration procedures	73	57.0
Participation with inter-institutional activities	61	47.7
Faculty demographic characteristics	60	46.9
Assistance in budget preparation	59	46.1
Problems of a specific student group	59	46.1
Study of organizational structure	59	46.1
Major assistance in developing grant proposals for other departments/divisions	59	46.1
Space utilization study	56	43.8
Study at the request of the alumni office	53	41.4
Study of the goals of students	47	36.7
Effects of non-intellectual factors on student success	46	35.9

Table 5 (Continued)

Institutional Research Project	Freq.	%
Study of private sources of funding for higher education	42	32.8
Study of adjustment problems of students	34	26.6
Evaluation of new teaching methods	30	23.4
Study of student motivation	29	22.7
Study habits of students	23	18.0
Study related to land acquisition	19	14.8
Study of tax sources for higher education	8	6.3